

Topic 11

Minto Morley reforms (Indian Council Act 1909)

Lord Minto (Viceroy) & John Morley (Secretary of State) responded to the demand for an increased share in government for Indians. They drew a series of reforms in 1909 passed by the British Parliament as the Indian Councils Act or Minto Morley reforms. It **increased membership of legislative councils** in both the central and provincial governments. Importantly, educated men who paid a certain sum of taxes were allowed to **vote** for the first time in Indian history. Some seats were **reserved for Muslim candidates**, and only Muslims could vote for them. Moreover, the elected members were also empowered to question officials; to debate legislation, including the budget; and to introduce laws. However, the viceroy and the governors still had total control and could veto any laws that were passed. This act and other measures gradually restored calm to India. The act is important because it established representative responsible government for India.

The following were the main features of the Act of 1909:

1. The number of the members of the Legislative Council at the Center was increased from 16 to 60.
2. The number of the members of the Provincial Legislatures was also increased. It was fixed as 50 in the provinces of Bengal, Madras and Bombay, and for the rest of the provinces it was 30.
3. Right of separate electorate was given to the Muslims.
4. The members of the Legislative Councils were permitted to discuss the budgets, suggest the amendments and even to vote on them.
5. Two Indians were nominated to the Council of the Secretary of State for Indian Affairs.
6. The Governor General was empowered to nominate one Indian member to his Executive Council.

Expected Questions & Answers

Question No. 1: The Morley Minto reforms were the most important of the attempts by the Muslims, Hindus or the British Governments in seeking a solution to the problems in the Sub Continent between 1906 & 1920? Do you agree? Give reason for your answer. 14
June 2003 Q. 2 c

Question No. 2: Why did the congress party oppose the Morley Minto reforms of 1909?
7
November 2001 Q. 2 b

Question No. 3: Were the Morley Minto reforms the most important attempt by the Muslim, the Hindus or the British in seeking a solution to the problems in the sub continent between 1906 & 1920? Explain your answer. 14
November 2005 Q.3 c

Question No. 4: the Morley Minto reforms were more important than any other political developments between 1909 & 1919. Do you agree or disagree? Give reasons to your answer. 14
November 2007 Q. 3 c

Question No. 5: why did Congress oppose the Morley Minto reforms of 1909? 7
November 2008 Q.2 c

Question No. 6: The Lucknow Pact of 1916 was the most important attempt by either the Muslims, Hindus or the British government in seeking a solution to the problems in the sub-continent between 1909 and 1919.' Do you agree? Give reasons for your answer. Oct/Nov 2012 Q.2 c
14

Question No. 7: How successful were political developments in finding a solution to the problems in the sub-continent between 1909 and 1919? Explain your answer. 14
May/June 2014 Q. 2 c

Answer to question No 1:

Morley Minto Reforms 1909 were a definite improvement & advance on the act of 1892. It was an important step in the direction of representation & responsible government. But Minto Morley reforms didn't solve the problems in the sub continent. Therefore it is not possible to agree with the statement, because the demand of the **self-rule** was not granted. But From the British government point of view it can be said that these reforms increased the members of the central legislative assembly from 16 to 60 & first time an Indian was included in Viceroy's Executive Council. But the reforms didn't introduce **democracy** in the country. It only allowed some opportunity to a limited number of Indians to participate in law making & administration with limited powers. The legislative had no control over Executive. The assemblies could pass resolutions in the form recommendations which **viceroy** or Governors (in province) could accept or could not accept. The number of **voters** was very small & system of voting was discriminatory. The congress was not satisfied because the aim of self rule was still very far. One Indian member was added to viceroy's Executive Council & one to each of provincial Councils. The Congress condemned the reforms but agreed to work with them. Muslims were satisfied over the grant of separate electorate in the 1909 reforms because it protected Muslim rights to some extent.

In 1913 Muslim league added self rule to its demands. it brought the congress & ML closer. Mr. Jinnah joined the ML in 1913 & since then he made very strong efforts to bring the two parties closer so that achieving of self-rule may be easier. The annual meetings of Congress & ML were held at Lucknow in 1916 & leaders of both parties came to some agreements. The Congress accepted the right of separate electorate for Muslims & the one third seats in the central assembly were to be given to Muslims. Both parties demanded that elected members in both Central & Provincial assemblies would be in majority. They also agreed upon autonomy for provinces & on the principle of weightage.

In 1909 the Minto Morley reforms had promised that more powers will be given to Indians after 10 years. Therefore in 1919 Reforms more concessions were given. A system of two houses was proposed for the Central Legislature. Number of members was greatly increased & elected members were to be in majority. The 1919 reforms introduced the system of Diarchy in provinces. According to this system the unimportant or transferred subjects (agriculture, education, and health) were given to Indian ministers. Important or reserved subjects (police, Justice, Revenue) were under the control of the Governors & Executive Councilors who were British. Three Indian members were introduced in Viceroy's Executive Council. Although the number of voters was increased, yet the right to vote was still discriminatory. These reforms also disappointed both the ML & the Congress because both had hoped for more substantial powers. The Viceroy and Governors had vast powers to appoint ministers & to dismiss the assemblies. In short the Act of 1919 didn't do much to solve the constitutional problem of India.

We come to the conclusion that the Lucknow Pact 1916 was the most important political development between 1909 & 1919. under the Lucknow Pact both the congress & ML were moving in the right direction with cooperation & understanding. If both the parties maintained their cooperation & concession to each other the goal of self rule or independence would have been achieved much earlier.

ANSWER TO QUESTION NO. 2:

The congress opposed and rejected the MMR of 1909 because congress has stered demanding **self-rule** and independence of India while the reforms didn't give any inclination to give any effective power to Indian to run the government.

Besides that, the reforms granted separate electorate to the Muslims. The congress was in favour of joint electorates. The congress claimed that it represented all Indian people and that separate electorate was undemocratic. Some Hindus also resented the relative high position of Muslims in the councils despite their much smaller numbers.

Besides that the Viceroy's council had no real power. They could only discuss and debate an issue and present their opinion in the form of suggestions. The real power rested with the viceroy and governor of provinces. Therefore congress opposed MMR of 1909.